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ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

The electronic newsletter of the Alabama State Department of Education

2012 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS Five Alabama Schools Recognized

Five Alabama public schools were recognized based on their overall academic excellence or for making progress in improving student academic achievement levels. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized 269 national schools as 2012 Blue Ribbon Schools.

The USDE will honor approximately 219 public and 50 private schools at a ceremony on November 12-13 in Washington, D.C.



The Alabama schools honored were:

- **Daphne High School** (Baldwin County)
- **Forest Hills School** (Florence City)
- **Liberty Middle School** (Madison City)
- **Piedmont High School** (Piedmont City)
- **Spencer Elementary School** (Mobile County)

The National Blue Ribbon Schools award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' levels of achievement.

A list of the 2012 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available [HERE](#).

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FREE WEBINAR

Early Warning Dropout Prevention Training

On October 12, 2012, from 1:30-3:00 p.m. EDT, the U.S. Department of Education, with Jobs for the Future, is sponsoring the second of a three-session series on rural dropout prevention and recovery, *Utilizing the Village: Using Early Warning Indicators and Interventions to Help Rural Students Succeed in School*.

Dr. Robert Balfanz of the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University will discuss considerations for early warning system development in rural localities, and several district leaders will highlight effective interventions that are cost-sensitive and easily implemented in rural districts.

Participants will also have an opportunity to share prevention/intervention best practices with peers.

[Register for this free event!](#) Contact [Monica Melville](#) if you need registration assistance or do not receive a registration confirmation within 24 hours.



Alabama Students Celebrate Improved Participation and Success in Advanced Placement (AP)

The College Board places Alabama at the Top of List for AP Progress

Alabama is opening doors to college for many more students.

The College Board released results that show a major increase over the last five years, not only in the number Alabama public school students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams, but in the level of scoring as well. With a 318% increase in minority participation and 102% increase in qualifying scores, the College Board ranks Alabama #1 in the nation for Advanced Placement improvement and growth, especially among minority groups.

Governor Bentley, the State Board of Education, business supporters, and A+ College Ready (the organization that implements Alabama's advanced placement program), celebrated these remarkable accomplishments along with AP students from around the state during a rally. Stanhope Elmore, just one of the 64 schools in four A+ College Ready cohorts, hosted the celebration. "Alabama students are succeeding in AP classes at unprecedented rates," Bentley said. "A+ College Ready is a proven investment that is preparing our students for college-level courses. It is a good day in Alabama when we see so many of our students from different backgrounds succeeding in AP courses."

"The intense support provided through A+ College Ready's Advanced Placement Training and Incentive program has resulted in 64 program schools achieving an average 110%

increase in passing math, science and English qualifying scores during their first year of participation. This increase is 15 times the national average," said A+ College Ready President, Mary Boehm. "We are so proud of the

contribution that the teachers and students in these 64 schools have made to the state's overall AP success."

Success on an AP exam is defined as a grade of 3 or higher. Most college and universities grant college credit for advanced placement for grades of 3 or higher with the highest grade possible being a 5. Earning college credit while still in high school results in college cost-savings for the student.

State Superintendent Dr. Tommy Bice said the results the College Board released are encouraging as research indicates students who do well on an AP exam are prepared to successfully take on a corresponding introductory college course. Bice said the rise in AP test-taking by all groups of students in the state indicates an increased interest in making sure students graduate from high school ready for college. "The continued increase in participation and

in successful scores earned in AP classes assists in making that goal a reality," Bice said. The percentage of all test takers in Alabama public schools who score a three or higher on at least one AP exam has increased by more than 75% in the last five years.

College Board 2011-2012 Participation and Performance Overview shows Alabama public school students increasing in the numbers of AP test takers every year for both genders every ethnic group of students, in most cases outpacing their national counterparts by two and three times.

ALSDE and A+ Education Partnership are also pleased to welcome 12 new schools into the A+ College Ready Program: Arab HS (Arab City), Daphne HS, Fairhope HS (Baldwin County), Cullman HS (Cullman City), Elmore County HS (Elmore County), Headland HS (Henry County), Francis Marion HS, Robert C. Hatch HS (Perry County), Montevallo HS, Vincent HS (Shelby County), Moody HS (St. Clair County), and Cordova HS (Walker County).



The College Board report shows:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Number of Alabama Public School Test Takers | 17,797 |
| Change from 2010-2011 | +18.5% |
| Five Year Change | +102.7% |
| Number of National Public School Test Takers | 1,813,533 |
| Change from 2010-2011 | +6.4% |
| Five Year Change | +34.7% |

Three Alabama Schools Awarded for Math and Science Progress

Successful math and science programs can serve as models for schools everywhere – and inspire educators to reinvigorate their own math and science programs for the next generation of scientists and mathematicians.

Intel Corporation honored 18 US schools as finalists of the Intel Schools of Distinction Awards in 2012. Of these 18 schools, 5 were announced as winners and one as the Star Innovator at an awards gala in Washington, D.C., in September. These top schools serve as outstanding examples of leaders in preparing tomorrow's innovators.



Winner for Mathematics: Elementary Schools **George Hall Elementary School, Mobile County Schools**

At George Hall, instruction is differentiated to meet the varied learning styles and levels of understanding of students, 99 percent of whom represent minorities and 90 percent of whom come from poverty. Instructors engage students in hands-on activities where they are given the opportunity to work with manipulatives and see concrete examples before thinking about abstract meanings. Lessons are designed to help students make real-world connections and engage in authentic problem solving. The results of George Hall's transformation are staggering: Whereas only 30 percent of students reached proficiency in math eight years ago, 96 percent of fourth graders achieved proficiency in 2011.

Winner for Science: Elementary Schools **Legacy Elementary School, Madison County Schools**

At Legacy, students don't acquire science knowledge by reading about it; instead, they experience it firsthand in the school's outdoor learning laboratory. Instruction is inquiry-based, student-centered, and technology-infused. Students plant vegetable gardens, create and study habitats for wildlife, examine microscopic organisms, and apply math strategies as they learn about land and water ecosystems. Students manage the high-tech weather station and produce educational videos with teachers acting as guides on the side. More than 90 percent of fifth graders achieved proficiency on state tests in 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Mathematics Semi-Finalist: Elementary Schools **Forest Hills School, Florence City Schools**

Forest Hills is one of three elementary schools serving Florence, Alabama. The school has a student population of approximately 800 students and a poverty rate of 45-50%. The AMSTI (Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative) Investigations are the core of the math curriculum. All math instruction at Forest Hills is aimed at identifying gaps in skills and then moving all students toward rigor and relevance. Teachers provide intervention sessions for students that have gaps in math skills. Intervention comes in many forms. Teachers have access to Riverdeep

software where teachers can prescribe lessons based upon each student's needs.

Also, students receive small-group instruction or one-on-one assistance from Title I personnel. Considering the diverse student population, the goal of math instruction and curriculum is to

advance all students toward quadrant 4 instruction with rigor and relevance. Student achievement on the nationally normed Stanford Achievement Test has shown steady increases over the past three years

Intel Schools of Distinction finalists provide innovative learning environments and programs that meet or exceed national math and science benchmarks.

- Up to three schools at each level—elementary, middle, and high school—are named as finalists in the math and science categories.
- Each finalist receives a cash grant of \$5,000 from the Intel Foundation and a trip to Washington, D.C., for a four-member team from their school.
- Six winners selected from the finalists receive an additional \$5,000 cash grant, for a total of \$10,000.
- One of these winners is selected as the "Star Innovator" and receives an additional \$15,000 grant, for a total of \$25,000.
- All five winning schools and the Star Innovator receive products and services from program sponsors.

National School Bus Safety Poster Contest

This year's theme is "**Stand Back from the Yellow and Black!**" All students are invited to create a poster for National School Bus Safety week. [Click here](#) for complete rules and application.

The Alabama poster contest winners will be selected by the Alabama State Department of Education (SDE) Pupil Transportation staff. The winning posters will then be sent to the national contest.

Local system winning posters (only one per division for each school system) should be received by the Department of Education, Pupil Transportation Section, no later than **September 28, 2012**.

Posters being submitted to the SDE must adhere to the rules as prescribed by the National School Bus Safety Poster Contest Committee. Posters received that do not adhere to the national rules will not be considered. All entries become the property of the Alabama State Department of Education and will not be returned.

Send posters to:

Alabama State Department of Education
Attn: Pupil Transportation, Brad Holley
P.O. Box 302101
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2101



Happy New Year!

by **Suzanne Culbreth**

2012-2013 Alabama Teacher of the Year
2012-2013 Secondary Teacher of the Year
Spain Park High School
Hoover City School System

As educators our "New Year" does not begin in January but when the first child walks into our classroom. We plan and prepare anxiously anticipating the first day of school. Bulletin boards, textbooks and lunch schedules replace noise makers and midnight kisses. As I celebrate my thirtieth "New Year," the sense of excitement has not dampened – even I had trouble falling asleep the night before. Our profession is unique in that we get the opportunity for a fresh new start each year in August.

As you begin your New Year, let me encourage you to remain focused on your students. We can easily become bogged down in the details of initiative overload and neglect our number one priority: the student. Take heed in the words of a former superintendent that we only have one chance with each child. You have a singular opportunity to reach each child in your classroom. Our job is to make each hour of each day the best possible learning experience for our students. This challenge may take us out of our comfort zone, but can we afford to squander the one chance we have?

With the New Year comes potential for professional improvement and growth. Become a reflective practitioner by analyzing your practice. Seek ways to improve. Consider taking a few moments each day to evaluate your lessons - make note of the successes and record possible "tweaks" for next time. Making this a part of my daily routine has provided me with innumerable avenues for continuous improvement. Our students are constantly changing as technology multiplies and expectations grow; therefore, we too must be willing to adapt. At our institute this year we were challenged to teach with passion. The speaker described passion as "an intense emotion that initiates action." I have observed this passionate action of teachers in classrooms throughout Alabama. Let's continue to make a passion for quality teaching an overarching resolution for the New Year!

Decatur City Schools Tells Success Stories with "We Know" Campaign

Who are our future leaders? Who will be in our future workforce? Will I be ready? These are questions heard in the community, at area employers, and from our students every day. Decatur City Schools' personnel take these questions to heart and can honestly answer, "we know." The **We Know Campaign** was created to shine a spotlight on how Decatur City Schools is preparing students for college, careers, and life in general. When it comes to telling the success stories of Decatur City Schools, there is no one who can tell it better than the students actually in the schools. That's why the **We Know Campaign** is run by junior and senior high school students from Austin and Decatur High Schools, with the help of community partners like *Red Sage Strategic Marketing Firm* and *The Decatur Daily*. These students produce all of the videos, photos, blogs, and social media posts for the campaign. [Check it out!](#)



Need ACLD PLUs? Don't hesitate, start today!

**Professional Development Your Way (PDYW) @
EDVANTIA 2012-2013 Schedule**

To register and participate in the EDVANTIA professional studies, participants must have an active STI PD account. If you need an STI PD account, please contact your school system's STI PD Manager. If you are not employed in an Alabama public school, you must contact Lori Newton, State Department of Education, at 334-353-1118 or send an [email](#). Edvantia cannot create an STI PD account for you.

Reculturing for Student Success

STI PD Title Number: PLUACLD045

This **16-week** online professional study provides participants with the knowledge and ability to promote and monitor a high-performance learning culture that promotes success for all students.

Registration Dates

10/8/2012 – 10/29/2012

12/17/2012 – 1/07/2013

4/1/2013 – 4/15/2013

Start – End Dates

11/5/2012 – 3/01/2013

1/14/2013 – 5/10/2013

4/22/2013 – 8/16/2013

Shared Leadership

STI PD Title Number: PLUACLD044

This **10-week** online professional study will provide participants with the knowledge and ability to utilize knowledge to plan for and sustain continuous school improvement in classrooms, schools, and school systems/local education agencies (LEAs).

Registration Dates

11/26/2012 – 12/10/2012

2/18/2013 – 3/4/2013

5/6/2013 – 5/27/2013

Start – End Dates

12/17/2012 – 3/6/2013

3/18/2013 – 5/31/2013

6/03/2013 – 8/14/2013

Additional Professional Study Opportunities

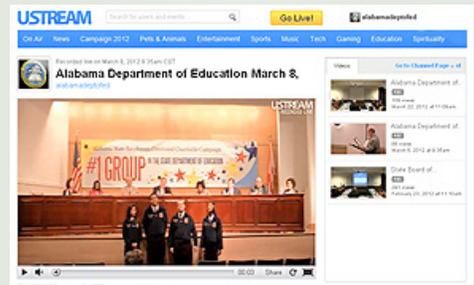
If you are interested in other professional study opportunities approved by the ACLD, go to www.leadershipalsde.com. Then, click **SEARCH**. Once you find a professional study of interest, contact the provider listed on the **ADDRESS BOOK** to register.

Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA) Annual Conference

The Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA) Annual Conference will be held in Montgomery, AL at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center on November 14-16, 2012. The conference will provide professional development for school counselors and offer information on current counseling issues.

The ALCA mailed registration packets to members of the association. Others may obtain packets by going to www.alamacounseling.org or by contacting Dr. Chip Wood with the ALCA at 1-888-655-5460 or alca@alamacounseling.org.

State Board of Education Meetings Now on Ustream.tv!



See your State Board of Education in action - Online at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/alabama-department-of-education>. See LIVE video every second and fourth Thursday of the month or watch the archived videos anytime you want (different days in July, November, and December).

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